

Reading Friends of the Earth



**Friends of
the Earth**

Newsletter Jul/Aug 2010

For more information see <http://www.foe.co.uk/reading>
email info@readingfoe.org.uk or 'phone 0118 9868260.

Diary:

General Meetings: Reading FoE usually meets on the second Wednesday of each month (but not this August), upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, at 8:00 p.m.

July 14th: – 8:00 p.m. at RISC – **Waste, Recycling, and Resources** – with Julian Kirby, Resource Use Campaigner with FoE Ltd. in London. An update on FoE's thinking from a national perspective and a review of opportunities for local campaigning. Particularly relevant when re3 (who manage waste for Reading, Bracknell and Wokingham) are going to send much of our waste to the Colnbrook 'energy from waste' incinerator - see http://www.re3.org.uk/disposal_page.asp?id=2

August 11th: - 7:00 p.m. at RISC back car park for 7:15 start – **Bike Ride** – a leisurely ride to a rural pub – details by e-mail nearer the time. Lights (in good working order) essential for return journey!

Other FoE Activities:

Saturday August 7th – Earley Green Fair – Beech Lane, Earley. Help needed to staff our stall – probably recycle 'Waste' material from Forbury Fever (see below).

Other Activities and Meetings:

Tuesday 13th July – Transport Users' Forum – Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, 6:30 p.m

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Forbury Fever:

We had a successful stall at Forbury Fever – the Council's annual open-air environmental celebration – this year on the same day as the Waterfest.

The sun shone and over 50 children played our 'Knock Down Recycling' skittles game – trying to hit the bottles and cans that can be taken in our recycling bins while avoiding the obstacles – polystyrene, plastic food trays, polythene bags, yoghurt pots etc. - that can in principle be recycled but cannot be taken by the doorstep collection.

Parents, teachers, and older children talked to us and took our leaflets and 30 people signed our two-part postcards encouraging the Council to 'Get Serious about CO2'.



Forbury Fever

Green Development in South Reading:

We had sponsored two separate teams of students to look at options for the "Courage Brewery" site and the old "Digital Pyramids" site between the old A33 and the A33 Relief Road. Both are interesting because of proximity to the M4 – what 'green' options are there for a site with excellent motorway access?

The reports on the two sites are complete, see <http://www.anjoro.plus.com/downloads/southreading.doc>, and we have contacted a number of Councillors asking for meetings and discussions. So far Rachel Eden, a Labour Councillor for Whitley, has expressed interest and we hope to meet her soon.

John has written a report to FoE Ltd., who grant-aided the project, to describe progress so far. Alina Congreve, the students' supervisor, has drafted a report on development options for sites near motorway junctions – another output of the project that we have promised to make available to FoE Ltd.

Waste Issues:

Eric Pickles MP, the new coalition Communities Secretary, is responsible for planning, local government, and waste, and is moving to make major changes to the system – the extent of which are not yet clear.

He has announced an end to the process whereby councils' performance against targets known as National Indicators - three of which relate to waste, others to energy and CO2 - is critically evaluated by the Audit Commission and then published in reports. It was not clear if the National Indicators would continue but he did say that he will encourage councils to publish a wide range of data online in an "open and standardised" format.

He has also attacked the audit commission's 'Waste Management Quick Guide' that recommends fortnightly collection of general waste, saying "Fortnightly collections are unpopular and unhygienic. It's the traditional weekly bin round that people want." The Guide says "The minimum life cycle of the fly is 14 days in the UK, so a fortnightly collection should be okay." http://www.letsrecycle.com/resources/doc/news/Waste_Management_Quick_Guide.pdf

The Minister has also scrapped plans to allow councils to levy 'pay as you throw' charges for household waste, and is backing 'rewards' for people who recycle. Publicity for the RecycleBank scheme in place at Windsor & Maidenhead says "The concept is simple - the more you recycle the more rewards you earn. Recycling will get a lot simpler as cans, paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles will go into the one bin - no more separating them into boxes. The scheme works by using a small electronic tag which links to equipment in the collection vehicles where your recycling is weighed to ensure to get the reward points you've earned." Some argue that this will encourage the attitude that it's OK to consume a lot of stuff so long as it is recyclable.

Commenting on the announcement Friends of the Earth's Executive Director Andy Atkins said: "Rewarding people for recycling can help tackle the UK's vast refuse mountain, but it must be part of a wide and comprehensive waste action plan. Every resident must have access to an efficient doorstep recycling scheme, with materials separated on collection to maximise the quality of the recyclables. Charging people for the waste they generate works well on the continent, where recycling rates are consistently higher than England - it should be introduced here as well. But crucially we must urgently cut the amount of waste generated in the first place - we cannot continue to ignore the environmental and economic impacts of our throwaway culture."

Meanwhile Wokingham is proposing that by 2012 Residual waste will be collected weekly in "official" plastic sacks restricted to 80 sacks per year per household; provision will be made for additional bags to households with greater than four residents, and the purchase of additional bags ...; Recycling collected weekly by 53 litre black boxes. See http://www2.wokingham.gov.uk/sys_upl/templates/PT_Directory/lib/serveDirectoryDocument.asp?id=6760724&pgid=81122&dirID=105 page 22.

Planning and Development South of M4 – and everywhere!

Eric Pickles MP, the new coalition Communities Secretary (yes, the very same, he's going to have a big impact on the environment) has written to local authorities urging them to ignore targets in the South East Plan. "Decisions on housing supply ... will rest with Local Planning Authorities without the framework of regional numbers and plans." He has also decided that gardens will no longer be classed as 'brownfield sites' for the purposes of development control - so one source of land for new homes within the urban areas will be less attractive.

The South East Plan was developed by the South East Regional Assembly (SEERA) which was about 70% Councillors, but final decisions on numbers were effectively taken by the Government Office for the South East. SEERA was abolished by Labour and its planning powers passed to the S.E. Development Agency (SEEDA) – a business-oriented organisation. Mr. Pickles now intends to abolish SEEDA and replace it with Local Enterprise Partnerships, described as "joint local authority-business bodies brought forward by local authorities to promote local economic development". So in principle some degree of local democratic control will be restored.

On 24th June Wokingham had intended to approve 'masterplans' for four 'Special Development Locations', including 6,000 homes at Arborfield and Shinfield/Spencers Wood. See proposals at: <http://www2.wokingham.gov.uk/environment/planning/news-and-information/shaping-our-communities/exhibitions-questionnaires> It has decided to put these on hold – delaying execution on these dormitory settlements which would take a lot of greenfield land and increase pressure on transport to Reading especially the A327 and A33 corridors.

The South East Plan would have forced excessive development on the Region, but it had many good general policies – in part developed through the South East Forum for Sustainability <http://www.sefs.org.uk/> - will they be lost? We await firm decisions on this, and on what Reading will do about its housing numbers targets. Questions are: how will planning policies be generated; how will strategic planning be done; what incentives will government offer local authorities to accept more development; will Ministers still pass judgement 'on appeal'?

GREN Makes Progress:

GREN, the Greater Reading Environmental Network, has held workshops to develop a Vision for a Sustainable Reading. Papers are available on the GREN website www.gren.org.uk – some way down in the Resources section – see <http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/SustainableReadingVisionoutputs.doc>.

Paul Harper, the chair of GREN, occupies a place on the Reading Climate Change Partnership, which is preparing an input to the Reading Sustainable Community Strategy revision due in 2011. Again a draft Issues paper is on the GREN website at <http://www.gren.org.uk/resources/RCCPSCSDRAFTprioritiesJune2010.doc>

Comments on either of these would be welcomed by GREN.

The GREN website is intended to be a comprehensive portal to all environmental groups in the area – allowing us to list activities and add news items. Reading FoE should soon be listed there and we are posting details of meetings. Everyone is encouraged to register and to use the site to post news, events, references etc.

Rushy Mead Turbines:

The University of Reading owns land south of the M4 between junctions 10 and 11 and is working with Partnerships for Renewables (PfR) to explore the feasibility of siting wind turbines on the land around Rushy Mead – for which it would receive a share of the revenues. PfR is a Carbon Trust enterprise, part-funded by HSBC.

PfR claim "If four turbines are constructed they could generate approximately 22 GWh of green energy per year. This is equivalent to the amount of energy used annually by over 4,800 average households. A wind energy development of this scale is expected to avoid approximately 9,400 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year."

Following a detailed assessment of the wind resource and extensive discussions with aviation authorities, they are expecting to submit a planning application to Wokingham Borough Council in the autumn. They will be showcasing the proposal in July this year, where they will be able to confirm turbine numbers, locations and dimensions – at this point in time it is envisaged that the site is suitable for four turbines with a blade tip height of 130m.

PfR will be presenting the latest details during public exhibitions in July at Arborfield and Earley. The materials available will include photomontages to show what the current layout would look like from certain locations. The public exhibitions will be held in Arborfield and Earley.

Tuesday 20th July – 15:00 to 20:00 – Earley Community Resource Centre

Wednesday 21st July – 15:00 to 20:00 – Arborfield Village Hall

It is to be expected that HARM – Householders Against Rushy Mead – will attend the exhibitions so it would be good for people in favour to attend and show support.

Green Investment Bank

Chancellor George Osborne pledged in his Budget speech to encourage investment in low carbon technologies with a commitment to publish detailed proposals for a Green Investment Bank after the autumn spending review. Welcoming the report by the Green Investment Bank Commission, which sets out a number of recommendations for the establishment of a Green Investment bank, Friends of the Earth's Senior Economy Campaigner Simon Bullock said: "A Green Investment Bank is urgently needed to help finance the development of a low-carbon economy and create new jobs and businesses - but it should be independent, funded by auctioning EU emissions trading permits, and focused on developing the UK's vast renewable energy potential and slashing energy waste. "Developing a greener UK will not only cut our climate-changing emissions: it will boost the economy, reduce our reliance on overseas fossil fuels and build a safer, cleaner future for us all.

Heathrow Expansion:

Reading FoE has arranged a meeting on this in October, as part of the International Festival. For details of the recent High Court Ruling against it see <http://www.hacan.org.uk/resources/briefings/high.court.ruling.pdf>

Whaling

The International Whaling Commission did not agree in June to a proposal to suspend a quarter-century ban on commercial whaling in exchange for a promise by the three whaling countries — Japan, Norway and Iceland — to reduce the numbers they kill, but decided on a one-year "pause" in negotiations on the commercial moratorium.

FoE National Conference

This will be in Reading University over the weekend 10th-12th September. Register now!

Useful Websites etc.:

www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk
www.foe.co.uk

GREN - Greater Reading Environmental Network <http://www.gren.org.uk> – see above. See also <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ReadingEnvNetwork/>

Doorstep collection of WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service in Reading being offered by Midex Reverse Technologies <http://www.midex-rt.com/>

True Food Co-op: www.truefood.coop now with new shop in Emmer Green!

Reading Borough Council Waste and Recycling:
<http://www.reading.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/wasteandrecycling/>

South East Forum for Sustainability: <http://www.sefs.org.uk>

Citizens Committee on Oil Peak And Decline (COPAD) www.copad.org

<http://www.fishonline.org/> gives info on over-fishing, fish to avoid, etc.

www.ejfoundation.org (Environmental Justice Foundation)

Local Food Directory, with links: http://www.greenlink-berkshire.org.uk/Local_Economy.htm

RISC <http://www.risc.org.uk/readingfairtrade/>

Reading FoE Officers

At our 2010 AGM on April 14th Enrico Petrucco and John Booth were elected to the posts of Co-ordinator and Treasurer respectively.

Reading FoE e-mail communications

If you would like to be on our main mailing list and join in our day-to-day communications please email info@readingfoe.org.uk.

Alternatively we have a separate list for people who only want to receive our newsletter and information about important events and actions.

Reading FoE Subscriptions – Subscribe NOW for 2010/11

To join or renew, just fill in the slip below and send it off with your subscription. We aim to provide a regular newsletter to keep members up to date with the group's activities. Our subscriptions run from April to March and are set at £7.00 / £4.00 (waged / unwaged) to cover newsletter costs, meeting room hire and campaign expenses. Further contributions would be greatly appreciated. Even if you don't have time to take an active part, your support is welcome and allows us to demonstrate more local support.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Please tick if you are able to take an active part in our campaigns. We may contact you by phone.

I heard about the group from: _____

Please make your cheque payable to Reading Friends of the Earth, and return to the Reading FoE Treasurer, c/o 27 Instow Road, Earley, Reading RG6 5QH.